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October 12, 2012
End of the Line

The End of the Line, a 2009 film by Rupert Murray, describes the collapse of the world's fish populations and the connections with people. Humans have overfished the world's oceans, and catching more fish brings us further from the possibility of a sustainable fishing industry. The film begins by discussing overfishing, and how overfishing has led to a collapse of fish stocks. The film proceeds to reveal the current fishing problem, and how many countries are continuing to overfish the world's oceans. Finally, the film describes methods of sustainable fishing. The film is packed with information, and contains lots of figures, examples, and footage of fish.

The sustainability problem of the fishing industry has many aspects described in the film. Political, legal, and cultural issues all contribute to the sustainability problem of the fishing industry. Historically, the problem with sustainable fishing was informational, because people assumed that the oceans contained limitless resources. In addition, technology allowed increased fish catch, which offset reduced fish populations, but contributed even more to the collapse of the fish. Political problems cause sustainability problems because the fishing industry lobbies to increase allowable fish catch to unsustainable levels. Also, companies will buy rights to fish in foreign countries where they will overfish the stocks and move on to another place. In addition, legal issues become a problems because the fishing industry will often take more than allowed, and will not be prosecuted. Japan has serious problems ensuring that companies don't take more fish than is sustainable. The Japanese culture creates this sustainability problem because it is considered high class to eat tuna, so there is a high demand for tuna in Japan.

The most compelling part of the film was the suggestion of a jellyfish burger. As fish populations decline, jellyfish populations are increasing, and if humans continue to overfish the oceans, jellyfish could become the replacement ocean food source. The footage of people shopping at Wal-Mart was not very compelling, it would have been more interesting to inform viewers what kinds of fish could be used as a substantial sustainable food source in the future. The film was a very educational environmental film, and adding in more information would have made the film seem crowded. The film could have contained more connections between the different sections, or more information about where to find a jellyfish burger.

The End of the Line contained several suggestions for sustainable fish. Firstly, eating smaller fish is less trophically resource intensive, and is therefore more sustainable than eating tuna. In addition, buying fish from companies that have an independent sustainability certification is better. Finally, the best way to protect fish is to create protected areas of the ocean, allowing fish to have places to recover their populations.

Japan continues whaling, despite agreements to stop whaling. This is also due to the Japanese culture, which highly values whale meat. The Veta la Palma fish farm (mentioned in class) in Spain produces 1200 tons of food per year.